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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7141
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7807
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 3544
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 6573
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1810
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1398
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 8241
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 8444
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 001329

SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: BJP: NOT THERE YET

REF: A. NEW DELHI 1278
[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 559

[1](#)1. (U) The BJP,s two-day national executive meeting held in Lucknow was expected to be a fire-works show, complete with stinging accusations and counter charges. Embassy contacts and media report that passions ran high, and the meeting lived up to its controversial billing. In the aftermath of the BJP,s two-day national executive meeting, the party leadership asked Uttarakhand Chief Minister B.C. Khanduri to resign. Uttarakhand Health Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal has been appointed Chief Minister in Khanduri,s stead. After a series of public resignations from party ranks, the ongoing factionalism and public debate show signs of abating. END SUMMARY

UTTARAKHAND: "TAKING FULL RESPONSIBILITY"

[1](#)2. (SBU) The BJP lost all five of the Uttarakhand Lok Sabha (lower house of Parliament) seats in the 2009 general elections, and Chief Minister Khanduri has received the lion,s share of the blame for the dismal defeat. Embassy contacts report that the former Indian army general lacks support in Uttarakhand and is seen as oblivious to the concerns of both the plains and hill populations. His original selection as CM was laced with controversy; Khanduri was chosen by Advani,s team and begrudgingly accepted by the strong RSS base in Uttarakhand. BJP President Rajnath Singh said Khanduri "takes full responsibility" for the 2009 defeat.

RECASTING HINDUTVA, DISTANCING VARUN?

[1](#)3. (U) Through the mudslinging and factionalism, BJP leader L.K. Advani reminded his party that 116 seats in the Lok Sabha and 47 seats in the Rajya Sabha (upper house of parliament) still left the BJP as the second largest political party in the Indian parliament. Striking an optimistic tone, Advani pointed out that the BJP continues to head eight state governments. (Note. The BJP heads state governments in Karantaka, Chattisgarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. In Punjab and Bihar, the BJP has partnered with regional parties to form governments and is the junior player. End Note.) "BJP is by no means an inconsiderable force in Indian politics", said

Advani and added, "if anything, by decimating the third and fourth fronts, the recent elections have concretized BJP as the only alternative to Congress". He reminded his party that they have rebounded from far worse. In the 1984 elections, the BJP managed to win only two seats in Parliament.

¶4. (U) Advani quoted former RSS chief Balasaheb Deora,s 1980 speech to RSS at the national executive meeting, urging the party to evolve while citing historic precedence. He urged party members to move beyond "any narrow or bigoted anti-Muslim interpretation of Hindutva," recognizing the concerns of Muslim BJP MPs who, along with several other BJP MPs, blame Varun Gandhi,s incendiary speech (Ref B) for significantly contributing to the BJP,s defeat. Advani claimed that he had tasked BJP spokesperson Ravi Shankar Prasad to "disown Varun,s statements," a few days before the national executive meeting. (Note. Varun Gandhi claims the footage of his speech has been doctored; Advani and the BJP stand by this assertion. Since the national executive meeting, local media have quoted Advani saying "BJP will not disown Varun, only correct him". End Note.)

¶5. (U) The meeting was a mixed-bag in terms of the BJP,s ideological redefinition. Party members made much of the "Hindutva-Hinduism" distinction and the party,s self definition as a "right-wing entity" vice "nationalist organization." However, no clear ideological direction emerged at the meeting or in the aftermath. Party operatives pointed out the need to reach out to Muslim voters with

NEW DELHI 00001329 002 OF 002

concrete development plans, with one giving anecdotal examples of Muslim mothers crossing religious lines and voting for BJP candidates because of the "superior child development schemes" put forth by local BJP candidates.

ALL QUIET ON THE RSS FRONT

¶6. (U) The BJP,s ideological fountainhead, the RSS, has been conspicuously quiet in the aftermath of the national executive meeting, making no comment on the proceedings and talk of the "evolution" of Hindutva. BJP leaders were careful to stress the RSS,s strong historical partnership even while justifying a more inclusive approach to Muslims. The meeting was held at an RSS center in Lucknow instead of at a luxury hotel where prior BJP national executive meetings were held, thus explicitly underscoring BJP ties with the RSS.

STILL THE ADVANI SHOW

¶7. (U) L.K. Advani took center stage at the national executive meeting, and no mention of future leaders or plans for his succession have surfaced. Reports of the meeting resounded with the cacophony of several prominent leaders taking potshots at each other and defending their own records, however no prominent new leadership made a debut. Advani seems determined to focus his energies on the upcoming assembly elections in Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Haryana and has left New Delhi to campaign.

ARE WE THERE YET? INCHING FORWARD

¶8. (U) COMMENT: The declining public blame game after the national executive meeting, the silence of the RSS, and the removal of CM Khanduri might signal the slowing of the post-election chaos within the BJP, and the beginning of an action-oriented approach. With party leader L.K. Advani throwing himself into campaigning, the media and public focus is slowing shifting from BJP,s internal meltdown. Although the ideological direction the BJP will take is far from determined, the national executive meeting provided a voice

to the BJP,s Muslim members and their call to turn away from hard Hindutva rhetoric and toward a more inclusive approach. The RSS,s reticence during the meeting might signal their openness to a less hardcore Hindutva position. Post will continue to monitor BJP,s future strategy. END COMMENT
BURLEIGH